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COLONIAL REPORTS—ANNUAL.

P. 70 14

No. 1399.

GAMBIA.

Report for 1927.

*For Report for 1925 see No. 1306 (Price 9d.) and
for Report for 1926 see No. 1347 (Price 6d.).*



Printed in the Gambia.

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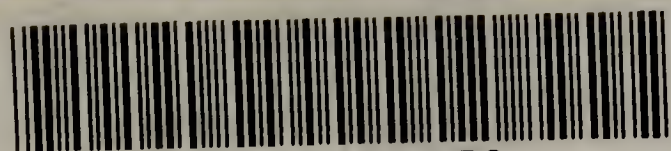
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THE GAMBIA.

ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 1927.

History and Geography.

The first descriptive account of the Gambia dates from the middle of the 15th century, when Alvise Cada Mosto, a Venetian, visited the river in charge of an expedition fitted out by Prince Henry of Portugal. He appears to have travelled some 40 miles from the mouth in 1456. The Portuguese were able to maintain a monopoly of the trade for more than a century; an English expedition, fitted out in 1481, was prevented from sailing by the influence of King John II of Portugal. In 1588 a Patent from Queen Elizabeth gave certain merchants of Devon and London a monopoly for 10 years of the "free and whole trafique trade and feat of merchandise" to and within the Senegal and Gambia rivers. It was stated in the Patent that one voyage had already been performed. The second voyage under the Charter, which was made in 1591, is described in Hakluyt. The French had then traded in these parts for above 30 years, but the "Frenchmen never used to go into the river of Gambia, which is a river of secret trade and riches concealed by the Portugals".

The power of Portugal was, however, on the wane, and early in the 17th century the English established themselves in the Gambia and the French in Senegal to the north. For the following two centuries these countries contended with varying fortunes for the mastery of the two rivers, the coast ports between, and the trade of the hinterland.

In the 18th century the Royal African Company controlled the commerce of the Gambia, and made large profits on their cargoes of slaves and gold and ivory and beeswax.

Chartered Company administration was ruined by the Act of 1807, which abolished the slave trade, and although an annual subsidy of £23,000 was paid to the Company it was unable to make a profit, and its assets were taken over by the Crown.

Since 1816 the seat of Government has been at Bathurst, which was founded by the English merchants who left Senegal and the Island of Goree when those territories were restored to France after the Napoleonic wars. It was named after the then Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Colony, which comprises the towns of Bathurst and Georgetown and some adjoining land, has an area of only 69 square miles.

The Protectorate is a narrow strip of territory ten kilometres wide on each bank extending up the river for 250 miles from Bathurst. The Gambia River has its source near the village of Labé on the Futa Jallon plateau. It flows westward for about 700 miles. The river is navigable for ocean going steamers as far as Kuntaur, and for vessels drawing less than two fathoms as far as Koina, the easternmost village in the Protectorate, where there is a rise of two feet daily with the tide. During the rains the upper river rises some thirty feet. This year when the floods were exceptionally heavy the buildings at Basse, the largest market in the Protectorate in the dry season, were twelve feet under water.

The inhabitants of the Protectorate are mostly Jollofs, Mandingos, Fulas, and Jolas, nearly all of whom are Mahommedans, except the last named tribe who are pagan and lower in the scale of civilisation than the others.

The currency is British West African silver and alloy coinage and paper. Since the French five franc pieces were demonetised, little silver has been seen in the Protectorate. There was in circulation during the year about half a million pounds worth of alloy coinage, and notes to the value of £166,000. The monetary units and the standards of weights and measures are British, but the people are equally conversant with the metric system owing to their close contact with the neighbouring Colonies.

I.—General.

On the 4th of February Captain Sir C. H. Armitage, K.B.E., C.M.G., D.S.O., left the Colony on retirement after six years as Governor of this Colony and after thirty-four years service in West Africa. His successor, Sir John Middleton, K.B.E., C.M.G., late Governor of the Falkland Islands, assumed the administration of the Colony on the 10th of March.

The three unofficial members of Legislative Council have been re-appointed by the Crown for a further period of five years. The Senior unofficial member, the Honourable S. J. Forster, has represented Bathurst like his father before him for over twenty years. He was made an M.B.E. on the King's Birthday.

After nearly forty years' residence in this Colony the Reverend Mother Joseph of the Congregation of St. Joseph of Cluny died in June. The deceased lady, who was highly respected, held the Membership of the Order of the British Empire. Her funeral was the occasion for a remarkable manifestation of public sympathy on the part of the whole community, Mahommedan as well as Christian.

II.—Finance.

The revenue and expenditure for the last five years has been :—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Revenue.</i>	<i>Expenditure.</i>	<i>Loans.</i>	<i>Surplus of Assets over Loan and Liabilities.</i>
	£	£	£	£
1923	407,581	211,317	147,893	148,058
1924	208,613	203,635	125,893	175,036
1925	189,086	271,836	113,743	104,436
1926	214,181	213,643	103,601	115,116
1927	252,419	277,625	84,171	109,340

The revenue in 1923 included £177,893, part of a loan from the West African Currency Board to cover the loss on demonetisation.

The expenditure in 1925 included £32,546 for the writing off of the rice and seed nut debts of the Protectorate.

The expenditure in 1927 included the sum of £50,000 which was set aside for the establishment of a Reserve Fund.

The liability to the West African Currency Board incurred in 1922 was reduced during the year by £19,430.

Customs receipts, which represented 68 per cent of the total revenue of the Colony, brought in £172,887 as against £141,003 the year before.

A comparison of the four chief items of duty during the last five years indicates an improvement in revenue with an increased ground nut crop.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Export Duty. Groundnuts.</i>	<i>Import Duty. Kolas.</i>	<i>Ad valorem Duties.</i>	<i>Tobacco.</i>
	£	£	£	£
1923	60,622	37,301	36,516	15,308
1924	57,572	29,231	18,867	11,172
1925	46,124	23,016	16,821	10,748
1926	56,966	32,925	23,348	11,855
1927	64,342	44,795	26,797	17,347

The cost price of investments held at the close of 1927 was £247,246. The securities depreciation fund of £13,237 covers more than twice over the present depreciation of the surplus funds investments.

III.—Production.

The total value of exports was £999,000. Except for palm kernels, 719 tons valued at £11,611, and hides, 28,316 valued at £9,288, the sole export of the Gambia is ground nuts, on which an export duty of £1 a ton, raised from 5/- in 1862 to 6/8 in 1874 and to its present rate in 1920, is levied.

The tonnage and value of the crop for the last five years has been as follows :—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Quantity in Tons.</i>	<i>Value.</i>
		£
1923	64,178	864,885
1924	60,622	861,925
1925	48,700	693,097
1926	61,072	862,578
1927	69,240	967,941

The main percentage distribution of the ground nut export trade during these years has been:—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>British.</i>	<i>French.</i>	<i>German.</i>	<i>Dutch.</i>
1923	47	39	7	—
1924	55	33	3	4
1925	46	35	5	6
1926	40	26	14	16
1927	9	42	20	21

An increased crop of ground nuts was set off by a poor harvest of corn and other food stuffs, but the year was one of greater prosperity to the farmers, who repaid promptly the 700 tons of seed nuts and 920 tons of rice which were issued to them during the rains.

There are no accurate statistics of the amount of food stuffs grown in the Protectorate and consumed there. The rice and other crops suffer much damage from the depredations of wild beasts in spite of the issue of gun powder for shot guns on a considerable scale. There are still large areas of uncleared land in which such beasts take refuge.

Cattle disease was again rife in many districts and between fifteen and twenty thousand head were lost.

In the absence of expert opinion it is believed that pleuro-pneumonia, as in 1917 when the herds were decimated, was the cause. Whatever it may be the flesh of many animals dying of the sickness is eaten by the people without any ill effects.

IV.—Trade and Economics.

The following table shows the balance of trade (exclusive of specie) during the last five years :—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Aggregate.</i>	<i>Imports. (c.i.f.)</i>	<i>Exports. (f.o.b.)</i>	<i>Balance of Exports over Imports in £.</i>
	£	£	£	£
1923	1,736,967	790,013	946,954	156,941
1924	1,563,059	669,700	893,359	223,659
1925	1,338,548	615,927	722,621	106,694
1926	1,555,303	651,137	904,166	253,029
1927	1,862,376	863,376	999,000	135,624

The largest increases of imports were in rice and sugar,

—	<i>1926 Tons.</i>	<i>Value.</i>	<i>1927 Tons</i>	<i>Value.</i>	<i>Increase.</i>
		£		£	£
Rice	4,612	72,270	7,939	124,457	52,187
Sugar	925	18,504	1,310	33,961	15,457

whilst kola nuts showed a slight decrease in value.

—	<i>1926 Cwt.</i>	<i>Value.</i>	<i>1927 Cwt.</i>	<i>Value.</i>	<i>Decrease.</i>
		£		£	£
Kolas	17,459	98,473	24,002	97,967	506

Great Britain supplied most of the following goods :—

Apparel, bags, coal, cottons, metals, motor cars, oils edible and spirits potable.

From France were obtained most of the biscuits, boots, hats, rice, sugar, soap and wines, and from the United States flour, oils not edible and tobacco.

The percentage of imports for the last five years has been :—

—	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
British Empire	69	54	55	60	52
France	13	17	27	25	31
Germany	7	16	8	3	6
United States	5	5	5	4	6

The progress of trade in 1927 may be briefly summarised as follows. Great Britain sold to the Colony merchandise to the value of £334,000 and took produce to the value of only £81,000, in which the principal item is 4,400 tons of ground nuts, and for this small quantity of the Colony's staple product a not less favourable market could readily be found elsewhere.

France sold merchandise to the value of £264,000 and purchased produce to the value of £420,000. Germany and Holland sold merchandise to the value of £48,000 and £11,000 respectively, and each purchased produce to the value of approximately £200,000.

V.—Communications.

569 ships of 1,287,018 tons entered and cleared in 1927, as compared with 552 ships of 1,255,241 tons in 1926. 63 per cent were British, 11 per cent French, the remainder being of German, Norwegian, American, and Italian nationality. These figures however do not represent the share which British shipping takes in the carrying trade of the Colony. It is estimated that British ships do not bring more than two-fifths of the total imports, while practically all the produce of the Gambia is exported in foreign vessels and nine-tenths of it to foreign ports.

H. M. S. "Delphinium" visited Bathurst on three occasions during the year and in January the American yacht "Utowana", owned by Mr. Alison Armour of Chicago took a party of botanists up the river.

Navigation has been assisted by the opening of the light on Bijol Island.

Many small craft ply on the river and the Government has maintained a regular service of steamers which have carried over 15,000 passengers and a large quantity of freight during the year.

Since January a ferry service between Bathurst and Barra has been run as a private enterprise. Roads also have been improved in the Protectorate, and transport by lorry is now superseding donkey loads nearly everywhere, with the result that the duration of the actual buying season is much reduced and though it extends nominally from December to May most of the crop is sold by the end of February.

A slight increase was recorded in the number of letters handled during the year, 270,420 as against 263,957 in 1926. £12,000 more of money orders and £1,000 more of postal orders were issued, and the travelling post offices on the Government steamers are gradually doing more business.

Owing to the restricted facilities of communication the air mail service from Dakar to Europe was not so frequently available as in 1926.

The wireless stations up river at Basse, Kuntaur and Georgetown sent and received 6,541 messages as against 4,267 last year.

VI.—Justice, Police and Prisons.

In the Supreme Court there were only 17 criminal cases, the lowest number for the last five years, but on the civil side 30 cases were decided as against 5 in 1926.

Since 1922 there has been a steady decline in the number of cases in the Police Magistrate's Court at Bathurst. A sharp rise in larceny cases from 54 in 1926 to 94 in 1927 has occurred, however, which was chiefly due to the large influx of foreign casual labour.

In the Protectorate the Native Tribunals have disposed of more cases than in previous years and their efficiency has been increased. The cautious member who is afraid of unpopularity should he be heard to concur in the infliction of a severe sentence, and the old silent member who only opens his mouth to express agreement with the opinion of the president have given way to more useful men.

The main body of Police are stationed in Bathurst. There are three small posts at Georgetown, Basse and Fattoto. Warder duty is carried out by the Police at the Bathurst and Georgetown Gaols. They also act as firemen. Four fires broke out in Bathurst during the year. They were all quickly got under, as the water supply and pressure has been improved. An excellent Band is maintained by the Force, but it is difficult to induce suitable boys to join locally.

In the annual musketry course the figure of merit was 60 out of a possible 96.

The number of cases reported to the Police was below the average of the last five years, those for larceny representing nearly half the total dealt with.

The original Gaol at Bathurst stood in the square, and was converted into the electric power station two years ago. The present Gaol is situated along the Cape road and was built in the first instance as a Sanitary Isolation Station. The total number of prisoners admitted in 1927 was 354 and the daily average was 82, most of them short sentence men.

VII.—Public Works.

The slipway is now under construction. It will, when completed, take ships up to 400 tons and will be available for the public as well as for Government craft. Electric haulage will be supplied from the Power Station. The installed power there consists of two 100 kilowatt sets and one 50 kilowatt set. The maximum observed peak load on the station is 108 kilowatts. A smaller plant is to be erected in order to give a continuous 24 hour service, as the absence of any appreciable day load has necessitated the addition of a smaller generating unit. All the principal establishments in Bathurst are now consumers of current for lighting purposes, and the demand from private persons in the town is growing gradually.

The scheme provided for the raising of pressure in the town mains for fire fighting purposes is operating successfully over the whole area supplied with pipe-borne water, and fire pressures can be raised four minutes after the receipt of an alarm.

The reclamation of swamp land at the back of the town has been carried on during the year. Progress has been much slower than was anticipated and the question as to whether dry filling should be substituted for dredging is under consideration.

VIII.—Public Health.

In spite of abnormal rains, 77 inches having been registered at Cape St. Mary, which is nearly double the average of the last 40 years, the year passed without any serious visitations.

A new factor in the situation is that persons leaving infected areas in Senegal arrive in Bathurst within the ordinary incubation period owing to motor transport. Great vigilance therefore has to be exercised, and a heavy responsibility is thrown on the medical authorities whose labours would be materially lessened if it were possible to obtain a better trained staff of subordinates. Except for an attack of relapsing fever in the South Bank Province which caused over 200 deaths the health conditions in the Protectorate were good. Some thousands of out-patients attended the dispensaries at Kaur and Basse. Besides the work done on the spot by the dispenser a considerable number of cases, which otherwise would never have gone there, requiring hospital treatment have been sent to Georgetown. People are beginning to realise the benefit of hospital treatment at Georgetown, where 192 patients were received, apart from 3,152 out-patients during the year.

Bathurst with a population of 10,283 has a birth rate of 27·03 and a death rate of 34·71 per thousand. Thanks to the efforts of the Women and Children Welfare Clinic infant mortality has been reduced to 88 as against a rate of 317 per thousand for the rest of the community. Baby Day was a great success and has become an annual institution. The capacity of the Colonial Hospital in Bathurst has been heavily taxed with 788 in-patients and 13,799 out-patients.

IX.--Education.

Before the standard of education in the Colony can be considered at all satisfactory it is necessary to raise the quality and status of the teachers and to secure the regular attendance of the pupils. Too many parents remove their children at an early age, and not more than 60 per cent of those in the elementary schools go higher than the fourth standard.

The number passing from elementary to secondary schools is small and during the year only 31 boys and 72 girls were on the registers of the latter. In Bathurst 1,531 children went to the affiliated schools and 264 to the Mahommedan school.

There is no system of kindergarten training, but physical drill has been introduced and has given a new interest to school life.

Two boys are being educated at Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone, having won scholarships from the Gambia, and two boys succeeded in passing the Cambridge School Certificate examination.

Apart from Mahommedan bush schools the only education available in the Protectorate is at Georgetown. The Wesleyan Mission has

maintained a day school there for over a century and has 72 pupils on its books at the present time. On New Year's day the Armitage School for Mahommedans was opened at Georgetown, the buildings of the former Catholic School now closed down having been taken over by the Government and enlarged. Thirty-six boarders and forty-seven day boys are now on the books and it is expected that the numbers will soon increase. In addition to the Koran, a curriculum of practical use to the children, who are nearly all sons of farmers, has been drawn up, which includes elementary instruction in agriculture.

X.—Lands and Survey.

A new rating list was compiled for the town of Bathurst as no general re-assessment had been made since 1922 when prices and values were at their height. Up to ten shillings a yard for freehold land near the main street is paid, but few freeholds now change hands in Bathurst, and until more land is reclaimed overcrowding is inevitable. Every available yard of land which is not freehold has been leased by the Government.

In the Protectorate there are no freeholds, but small lots for trading stations are leased for £3 a year and upwards.

There are 3 main types of land surface, consisting of undulating sand hills 41 per cent, plateau 27 per cent and river flats 24 per cent, water making up the remaining 8 per cent of the 4,000 square miles of the Gambia.

Ironstone ridges are a notable feature of the upper reaches of the river : there is but little soil on them. Where they give way to the light soil plains, the ground is excellent for ground nuts, koos, cassava and other food stuffs. A small secondary forest covers most of the area when not cleared for farms. The flats, as one proceeds up river, form good rice fields, but those near the mouth are useless for cultivation because of the extensive mangrove swamps.

The space available for production in the Protectorate is limited to about one half of the total area, but until an accurate survey is made no reliable statistics can be given.

XI.—Labour.

In Bathurst there was no shortage of labour either skilled or unskilled, and the Government, which employs about 300 men, was able to carry out its programme without difficulty. The usual rate is 1/6 a day for a 47 hours week. The tendency for youths of the artisan class to seek clerical rather than manual work is as marked here as elsewhere.

In the Protectorate the land is cultivated not only by the owners but by a floating population of strange farmers who come from neighbouring Colonies, just as the Irish harvesters used to come to England, and return to their homes after the crop has been gathered. Their numbers vary according to local prospects and inducements. Since 1922 less than 20,000 have crossed the frontiers annually, but this year 17,237 were counted as compared with 13,553 last year.

XII.—Miscellaneous.

Ten Ordinances and eight Regulations were passed during the year; none of them were of outstanding importance.

For the first time in the annals of the Gambia an inter-colonial cricket match was played at Freetown between representatives of this Colony and Sierra Leone. The result was a win for the Gambia by nine wickets.

C. R. M. WORKMAN.

31st May, 1928.

Colonial Secretary.

APPENDIX I.

Principal Firms, etc.

The following are the principal firms carrying on a general import and export trade :—

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Address.</i>	<i>Address in Europe (if any).</i>
African and Eastern Trade Corporation, Ltd.	Wellington Street	Royal Liver Building, Liverpool.
Etablissements Barthès et Lesieur.	„	8, Cours de Gourque, Bordeaux.
Bathurst Trading Co., Ltd.	„	34, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.
Etablissements Maurel et Prom.	„	18, Rue Porte Dijeaux, Bordeaux.
Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale.	„	32, Cours Pierre Puget, Marseilles.
Gambia Trading Co. ...	Buckle Street	23, Water Street, Liverpool.
Maurel Frères. ...	Wellington Street	6, Quai Louis XVIII, Bordeaux.
Louis Vézia & Co. ...	„	83, Cours de Verdun, Bordeaux.
Palmine, Ltd. ...	„	Moorgate Hall, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.
V. Q. Petersen. ...	„	—

All the above firms are represented on the Bathurst Chamber of Commerce.

APPENDIX II.

List of Barristers, Solicitors, and Patent Agents.

Barristers are entitled to practise as solicitors and *vice versa*.

* S. J. Forster, M.A., B.C.L. (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law, Wellington Street.

* I. J. Roberts, 6, Buckle Street.

* M. J. R. Pratt, M.A., B.C.L. (Durham), Barrister-at-Law, Allen Street.

† G. K. Roberts, 6, Buckle Street.

S. Barlatt, M. A., B, C. L. (Durham), Barrister-at-Law, Leman Street.

W. D. Carrol, B. A., B. C. L. (Oxon), Barrister-at-Law, Picton Street.

G. S. W. Ladepon Thomas, Barrister-at-Law, Clarkson Street.

S. A. Benka-Coker, Barrister-at-Law, Allen Street.

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BARBADOS.
BASUTOLAND.
BECHUANALAND PROTECTORATE.
BERMUDA.
BRITISH GUIANA.
BRITISH HONDURAS.
BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS PRO-
TECTORATE.
BRUNEI, STATE OF.
CAYMAN ISLANDS (JAMAICA).
CEYLON.
COLONIAL SURVEY COMMITTEE
REPORT.
CYPRUS.
FALKLAND ISLANDS.
FEDERATED MALAY STATES.
FIJI.
GAMBIA.
GIBRALTAR.
GILBERT & ELLICE ISLANDS.
GOLD COAST.
GRENADA.
HONG KONG.

JAMAICA.
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NORTHERN RHODESIA.
NYASALAND.
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SIERRA LEONE.
SOMALILAND.
STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.
SWAZILAND.
TONGAN ISLANDS PROTECTORATE.
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO.
TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS.
UGANDA.
UNFEDERATED MALAY STATES
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THE EMPIRE'S AGRICULTURE

An historical event of importance in the development of the Empire's Agriculture took place towards the close of 1927. The foundations were, it is believed, then laid for the ultimate creation of a real and effective British agricultural commonwealth. The occasion was the Imperial Agricultural Research Conference held in Great Britain in October and November, 1927, which was attended by delegates of high standing from all countries in the Empire.

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